DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 793 JC 000 732

AUTHOR	Buck, Jo Ann; Frank, Macgregor
TITLE	Preparing Future Community College Faculty: News from the Bat Cave.
INSTITUTION	Guilford Technical Community Coll., Jamestown, NC.
PUB DATE	2000-05-00
NOTE	10p.; With Toni Cowan.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adjunct Faculty; Community Colleges; Partnerships in Education; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Education Programs; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Guilford Technical Community College NC

ABSTRACT

The need for staffing adjunct community college faculty and the lack of specialized training for two-year college teachers led to the creation of The Faculty-in-Training Program. This program was established by Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) in North Carolina in cooperation with two local university English departments at the University of North Carolina and at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University. This pilot program employed teaching assistants at GTCC from the graduate programs at these universities, targeted toward those who might consider teaching careers at community colleges. The stakeholders in this program are: the English department, GTCC, the graduate teaching assistants, and the graduate schools. The paper outlines the advantages to each of these stakeholder groups for participating in this program; recounts the initial phases of starting the program, getting GTCC approval and making university contacts; states that three main groups worked together to implement GTCC's program: the mentors, the program director, and the teaching assistants; describes each of these three roles and its duties; asserts that preliminary anecdotal and statistical evidence suggest that the pilot program has had a remarkably successful start; and concludes with a teaching associate's description of the process of discovering her teaching persona, classroom competence, and professional faculty role after her completion of the pilot program. (VWC)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 446 793

Preparing Future Community College Faculty: News from the Bat Cave

Although there has been much demand historically for two-year college faculty since the birth of the technical and community college movement in the 1960s, training for two-year faculty has been erratic. Many of the specialized graduate programs founded in the early 1970s at such universities as Boston University, University of Michigan, and the State University of New York at Fredonia, have dwindled today. According to Cohen and Brawer, graduate-school-based programs for preparing two-year college instructors "never became a major source of two-year college teachers" because by the "start of the 1980s new, full-time teaching positions were scarce" (72). With the notable exception of George Mason University's National Center for Community College Education that still has a thriving program, many two-year college instructors are entering their positions with little specific training for this environment. Couple this lack of specific programs with the high demand for two-year full-time and especially part-time adjunct faculty, and colleges face real challenges in staffing their courses.

Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) in Jamestown, North Carolina, was no exception to this trend. With its English department relying heavily on adjunct faculty to staff about half of its composition sections, GTCC shares this need with nine four-year colleges and universities and four other community college locally. Add meager per-course salaries to this highly competitive environment, and the pool of qualified adjunct faculty continues to shrink.

Another complication facing GTCC is its role as a community college with a commitment to its mission and the community that it serves. Such factors justify the need for community college faculty to receive specialized training for their distinct teaching niche in the profession. It is time to dispel the common myth that those who teach at community colleges just "wound up there," either tired of the hassles of contemporary high schools or unable to get real jobs at four-year colleges.

These factors nudged the growth of an idea designed to fill the adjunct gap and to prepare specially trained community college teaching professionals. The process used to create this program, The Faculty-in-Training Program, and details of the program itself confirm a remarkably successful pilot year.

Benefits for All

Following research completed by an exploratory departmental committee in 1998, the English department established liaisons with two local university English departments at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University. The goal was to implement a program that would employ teaching assistants at GTCC from the graduate programs at these universities, especially those who might consider teaching careers at community colleges.

Stakeholders in the program were identified: the English department, GTCC, the graduate teaching assistants, and the graduate schools. For the program to achieve success, advantages for each stakeholder group had to be distinct and readily apparent.

TC000732

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dr. Macgregor Frank

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Advantages to the English department:

1) less reliance on transient adjunct faculty;
2) a different pool of possible teachers since master's level students are typically ineligible for teaching assistantships in doctoral-granting universities;
3) a steady supply of available teaching assistants, unless the graduate schools in the area radically changed their programs;
4) reliability of carefully guided faculty in GTCC English classrooms;
5) cost effectiveness since we could designate adjunct budget funds
6) development of working relationships with university English colleagues, earning the department greater respect;
7) opportunities for professional development for participating department members;
8) possibilities for scholarship and publication for participants; and,
9) departmental recognition for innovation from GTCC's administration and community college colleagues.

Advantages to GTCC

1. recognition for its support of innovation, gaining intangible benefits from the community;
2. recognition for the program at other colleges and professional academic organizations; and,
3. more qualified faculty staffing courses.

Advantages to the teaching assistants

1. an opportunity not available to them if their home colleges used only doctoral students as teaching assistants;
2. a per course stipend that would be competitive with what other local colleges would pay for the same work;
3. training as teachers;
4. specific community college training not available in their graduate English departments;
5. training in integrating specific, career-related skills (such as the SCANS competencies, a nationally identified list of skills desired by American employers) into their assignments;
6. guidance by a veteran faculty member mentor;
7. formal written evaluation of their progress;
8. the opportunity to forge professional networks;
9. the opportunity to enhance their resumes to make them more competitive when applying for community college faculty openings.

Advantages to the graduate schools

1. teaching experience for master's level students who did not have this option in PhD granting universities;
2. offering MA/PhD students with interest in community college teaching a unique program;
3. expanding graduate program options that could enhance the university's recruiting into its master's program;

4. provide a connection to these senior institutions through the teaching assistants and expose community college students to possible transfer options;
5. open lines of communication between community college faculty and their graduate school counterparts.

Getting Started

To get started with the program, the committee needed to have answers to some initial questions: Would the GTCC administration approve what the committee wanted to do? Would graduate school faculty cooperate? What would be the program's source of applications from interested candidates? The committee addressed these questions and investigated ways to structure the program, the number of candidates the department could support, issues of compensation, the specific duties of the TA's, the resources available to TA's in the department, methods of publicizing the program, and ways to ensure that the regional accrediting agency would not be an obstacle.

The committee also investigated the legalities of supporting teaching assistants at the community college. Since TA programs historically have been housed and managed through graduate schools, committee members were anxious to know whether restrictions limited TA's to these settings. Section 4.8.4 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' (SACS) brief guidelines for teaching assistant programs, however, indicated that TA's must have completed 18 graduate hours in the discipline, be directly supervised by an experienced faculty member, be informed of their rights and responsibilities, receive regular in-service training, and receive regular evaluations of their performance with institutional support. All of these were possible within the department and no mention of graduate school management appeared, so the committee could proceed.

GTCC Approval and University Contacts

With members of the administration, the committee examined the financial ramifications of the program. Although the college would pay teaching assistants the same amount for teaching courses as it paid adjunct faculty, TA's had to commit to additional working hours for the required training. Furthermore, not only to comply with SACS guidelines, but also for the program to function as intended, the director of the program had to have reassigned time to develop materials, serve as administrator, and essentially, become the lead teacher for the TA's. These meant additional dollars to support the program. Thus, instead of the departmental $ 1,250 per course salary, the administration directed that TA's be paid a stipend of $ 8000 dollars, which covered all of their duties for a two-semester appointment, including the teaching of four courses, writing center tutoring, seminar attendance, required college and departmental meetings, and interacting with mentors. In addition, it approved $ 5,000 to reassign the director from two classes each semester, so he could administer the program.

Next, committee members approached faculty members of the graduate English programs at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) and North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T), rather than try to work institution to institution. The response at both universities was positive. Individual faculty members not only supported the idea and benefits of

the program, but readily supplied advice and sample TA materials from their own programs. They agreed to support the program in their departments, to publicize it, to serve as contacts and distribute applications, to identify and contact qualified applicants, and to maintain informal contact with committee members at GTCC.

Unfortunately, NC A&T was unable to participate after the program was discussed at that university, but UNC-G, with its new director of English graduate studies, Dr. Bob Langenfeld, immediately became our partner. The committee prepared recruitment materials, created an application form that required candidates to discuss why they were interested in teaching in the community college, and drafted an advertising brochure which Langenfeld distributed to interested candidates. In addition, he examined the files of currently enrolled MA students, identified eligible applicants, and contacted them to inform them about the TA opportunity. When applications were submitted, committee members reviewed them, interviewed candidates, created appropriate correspondence, and accepted three TA's. The program began in August, 1999.

Implementing the Program:

Three main elements worked together to implement GTCC's program: the mentors, the program director, and the teaching assistants.

The Mentors' Role

Three mentors, who are experienced full-time GTCC English department faculty members, worked with the three graduate TA's. Each of the mentors served a supporting role for his or her assigned teaching assistant, providing advice, teaching materials, and strategies. Mentors acted as sounding boards for their teaching assistants and functioned in the capacity of faculty liaison. Furthermore, mentors observed their teaching assistants' classes twice each semester, conferring with them both pre and post-observation. Additionally, mentors contributed to the teaching assistants' annual performance evaluation. Finally, the mentors helped the director identify program needs and develop appropriate program materials.

The Director's Role

The program director represented the department in dealings with the applicants' graduate program director at UNC-G. He was the point of contact among the GTCC English department's three formal mentors, and he was the department member who received feedback from them about individual TA's and suggestions concerning program changes or refinements. He convened regular planning and assessment meetings with mentors and other interested faculty members and also arranged for department members with expertise in particular areas to meet with the TA's for professional development activities and covered classes for them if presenters had schedule conflicts.

Finally, he handled the program's administrative functions, from screening applications to keeping up with ongoing assessment to writing the final evaluation of each assistant's teaching

performance. As the main seminar instructor, he was primarily responsible for their training in the discipline, and he kept track of their development as teachers.

Teaching Assistants' Duties

The teaching assistants were assigned an initial teaching load of two first-semester composition classes and a second semester opportunity to teach the same first semester course again or to take on one of the courses following in the sequence, depending upon departmental needs and mentors' assessment and advice. The TA's could also opt to teach both of the second-semester composition courses—two new preparations—if they desired.

Because the department's intention was not simply to train community college teachers of English, but rather to develop fully-functioning community college professionals, the teaching assistants also served the department and the college as tutors in the Writing Center for six hours a week and, during second semester, as assistants in one of the department's distance-learning formats. In each of these venues, the assistants performed meaningful work, learning firsthand about the responsibilities and difficulties of teaching in these environments.

In addition to their instructional duties, TA's attended all department and college meetings, maintained regular office hours, joined NCTE and appropriate constituent or related organizations, networked with other teaching faculty, engaged in professional conferences outside the college, and pursued appropriate opportunities for professional publications. The department will ask each teaching assistant in the future to serve on one departmental or college-wide committee, thus providing professional experiences for them beyond the classroom.

The TA's took part in the regular college-wide and departmental in-service training as part of their professional development and also received additional training in the form of the director's weekly seminars. Some of these seminar sessions were devoted to special topics taught by mentors, as well as other members of the department, not only because we have a number of varied and talented faculty, but also because we wanted to include as many members of the department as possible and in that way to guarantee that the program did not become the special province of some, while others felt disconnected. Most of the seminar time, however, was spent in both theoretical and practical preparation for the teaching of composition. Erika Lindemann's A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers (3rd edition, Oxford UP, 1995), an excellent introduction to the discipline, served as the seminar's basic text. We particularly valued this text because it provides coverage of composition fundamentals and is a rich bibliographic resource.

Like adjunct instructors in the department, the TA's attended an orientation meeting some weeks prior to the college opening in the fall. There, in addition to the college and departmental procedures and paperwork all adjuncts receive, the TA's were acquainted with the mission, organization, and scope of GTCC and to provide some cautionary policies and disclaimers. The department also furnished them with sample syllabi for the course they initially taught, as well as with detailed first semester lesson plans, including the first two paper assignments. The aim was to instruct the TA's, via the sample syllabi, in what they must do and to suggest to them, via the sample lesson plans, one way of accomplishing it. Department members encouraged them to rely on the provided lesson plans as much as they felt they needed

to, but also to discover their own individual ways of achieving the course objectives, subject, of course, to approval by a TA's mentor or the program director. The committee did not supply material for the full semester, preferring it to be developed in seminar instead.

Finally, the department asked the TA's to observe classes taught by their mentors and others and to be observed twice by their mentors and once by the program director each semester. Committee members developed a clinical observation approach and worked out a checklist of items for the observer to consider during these observations. Before each observation the teaching assistants filled out a sheet indicating what they planned to accomplish in the lesson to be observed, what they had done to prepare the class for the lesson, and how the lesson would connect with following lessons. Following each observation there was a formal conference with the observer, summarized in a post-observation sheet. The intention was to provide the teaching assistant with a consistent written record of his or her progress and weaknesses, to furnish the program director with adequate and fair material to be considered in his final summative evaluation of the teaching assistant, and to satisfy the regional accrediting agency.

Taking Stock:

Preliminary anecdotal and statistical evidence suggested that the pilot program has had a remarkably successful start. The TA training program was comprehensive enough that the title "teaching assistant" for its student participants was revealed to be inaccurate. College personnel now call them "teaching associates." The current teaching associates seem skilled and ready to take their places among English colleagues in community colleges. Mentors and the director have grown professionally as they have shared their expertise and nurtured the TA's. And members of their audiences when the TA's have made formal presentations about the program at conferences have been most encouraging. GTCC students also seemed pleased with the results. Responses on student evaluations of teaching effectiveness suggested that their satisfaction with the TA's instruction was high indeed. When key items on the evaluations were compared for TA's and adjunct faculty, student ratings were consistently higher for the TA's.

The committee have planned changes and refinements to the program and have already received budget funding to double, at least, the number of TA's in the program for next year, based upon our initial success. Other departments at the college have expressed interest in replicating the program. The committee's first vision has become a reality, but the proof of the program's effectiveness will be the TA's success as full-time contributing members in two-year college English departments across the region.

A Teaching Associate's Perspective (Toni Cowan)

The final presented, a teaching associate who completed the pilot Faculty-in-Training program at GTCC, described her process of discovering her teaching persona, classroom competence, and professional faculty role through her participation in the program.

Initial Impressions

The FIT program allows graduate students with little or no teaching experience a chance to learn more about teaching and to develop a professional identity. When I entered the FIT program, my enthusiasm about this teaching opportunity was balanced with my apprehension and uncertainity about teaching community college students. My lack of experience made me unsure of even the most basic issues such as classroom management and structuring a lesson. Initially, I relied upon the sample lesson plans which had been provided by Dr. Mac Frank; however, as my confidence began to increase, I slowly began tailoring the sample lessons to fit my teaching style, and I eventually began to develop my own lesson plans. This developing sense of self-confidence and of individual, professional identity, resulted from various components of the FIT program.

Weekly Seminars

The weekly seminars were helpful in developing a sense of individual, professional identity. These seminars provided both a time for discussing pedagogical issues and for the Teaching Associates to discuss any questions or issues we were dealing with in our own classrooms. The pedagogical instruction gave us various methods and ideas to incorporate into our teaching while also giving them new ways to think about their teaching processes. For instance, the seminar of prewriting and invention strategies provided me with several ideas which I incorporated as I taught my students how to brainstorm and invent for an essay. The discussion time of the weekly seminars allowed us a chance to share more practical concerns we were facing, such as simple classroom management or dealing with a difficult student. These discussions also reassured us that other teachers shared the same experiences we did, and through these discussions, we developed a sense of camaraderie. Also, by offering suggestions to each other's problems, we began to recognize our own abilities to solve our problems, which helped us view ourselves more as teachers.

Mentoring and Observations

The combination of the mentoring relationship and the observation process also contributed to my development of a professional identity. By observing my mentor, Dr. Jo Ann Buck, and receiving her advice and help, I was able to see how a more experienced teacher solved problems, planned lessons, and managed a classroom. I was then able to take these observations and apply them to my own experiences, using the techniques I had learned from Dr. Buck and adapting these techniques to suit my own teaching style. Also, by meeting with her before and after she observed me, I learned to analyze my lessons before I taught a class and to analyze my teaching after I taught the class to see where I could improve the structure and presentation of the lesson as well as my management of the classroom. Not only did I learn to

analyze myself, but I also received feedback and comments from Jo Ann's observations of me. These comments could be about my organization of the class to my movement in the classroom. For instance, when Jo Ann first observed me, she noticed that I tended to remain on one side of the classroom. When she brought this to my attention, I became more aware of where I stood in the following classes and tried to move around to other areas of the room. By having others observe me and by becoming more aware of my own methods, I have become more analytical as a teacher and have taught myself to constantly seek areas of growth and improvement in my teaching.

Departmental Meetings

By attending the bi-weekly departmental meetings, I was able to interact with other English faculty and to develop an understanding of how an individual teacher and a department contribute to the life and goals of the community college. During these meetings, I was able to see how the individual English faculty interacted and worked with one another to achieve the goals of the department. Tasks were often delegated to various groups or committees, and individual faculty would volunteer to work with specific committees or groups to complete the tasks. As a department, we would decide how we could best contribute to the college goals. By attending and participating in these meetings, I realized that an English instructor's job does not end when he or she leaves the classroom; instead, his or her job also includes serving as an active member in a department of peers and continually seeking ways to improve the department and the college as a whole.

Office Space (The Bat Cave)

During the first year of the FIT program, the Teaching Associates shared a small office together, which we affectionately labeled *The Bat Cave*. Although this office offered little personal space, it did create an atmosphere which was conducive to conversation and sharing. The TAs would often discuss various issues or problems we were facing in the weekly seminars; however, we found that our interaction in this small office became essential and beneficial to our development as teachers and professionals. We would often discuss our lesson plans with each other, sharing what worked or what could have been better, and often we would take ideas or lesson plans which seemed relevant and would adapt them for our own classrooms. By constantly discussing what we were teaching, how we were teaching it, and how we related to our students, we were continually evaluating and analyzing our effectivness and success as teachers. This interaction encouraged us to improve and helped us to see how our individual teaching styles varied.

Incorporating New TA's

During the spring semester, the FIT program added a new TA. The two continuing TAs, Tom Riddle and I, took on the role of mentor to Joyce Traver, the new TA. This new dimension of mentoring a TA seemed to complete the cycle of growth and development Tom and I had begun during the first semester. In helping Joyce through her first semester, we shared our advice and experiences with her in an effort to ease her initiation into the community college environment as well as into the FIT program. By mentoring Joyce, Tom and I were able to

reflect upon what we had learned and to offer that knowledge and experience to Joyce. By realizing how we had grown and what we had accomplished, we were then able to look forward to new areas of growth.

Completing the Program

When I entered the program, I saw myself as a Teaching Associate, as someone who relied on more experienced professionals for guidance and advice. During my year in the FIT program, my perception of myself began to change. Through my experiences in the program, including the weekly seminars, my relationship with my mentor, the observation process, my relationship with my fellow Teaching Associates, and my mentoring relationship with Joyce, I began to see myself more as an independent, capable instructor. In fact, upon the leaving the program, I no longer saw myself as a Teaching Associate, but as a *teacher*. I now feel confident in my abilities as a teacher, and I know I am capable of managing all aspects of teaching in a community college. My experiences in the FIT program have helped me develop an understanding of myself as a teacher and my position as a member of a community college faculty.

Works Cited

Brawer, Florence B. "Community College Teacher Preparation: Past, Present, Future." 1 Jan. 1973. ERIC ED 071661.

Cohen, Arthur M., and Florence B. Brawer. The American Community College. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.

Kay, David W. Telephone Interview. 19 July 2000.

Reese, Jack E. "Structuring the Teaching Internship." Junior College Journal 42.8 (1972): 27-31. ERIC EJ 056567.

Vaughan, George. "Doctorate of Arts in Community College Education." George Mason University Center for Community College Education. 1989: np.

Wright, Scott. W. "A Graying Movement Ponders How to Cope with Mass Retirements." Community College Week, April 1997: 14.